

THE
LOST SPEECH
OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN



HONORÉ WILLSIE MORROW

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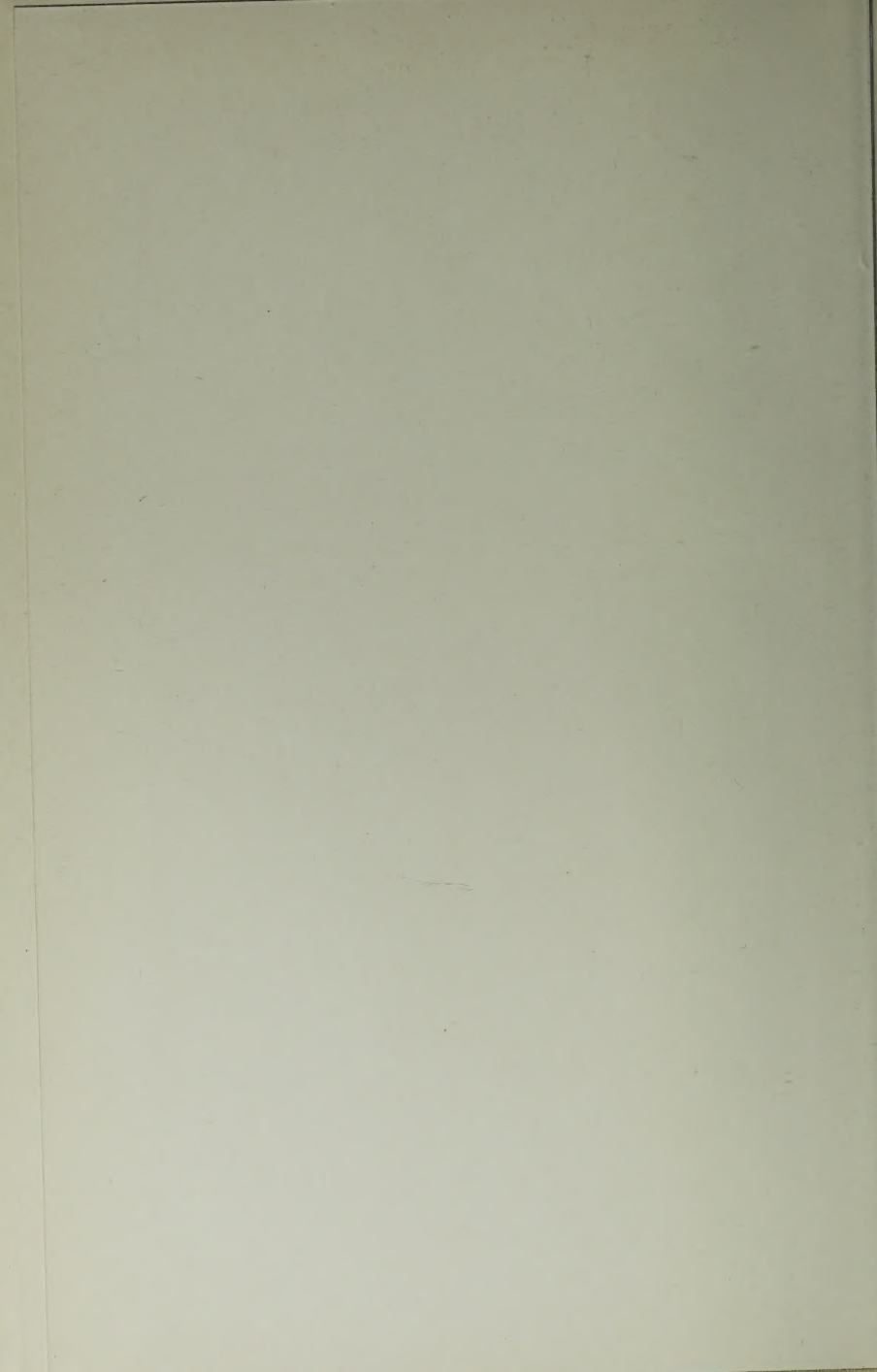
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THE LOST SPEECH OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN



THE LOST SPEECH

of Abraham Lincoln

A STORY BY

HONORÉ WILLIS MORROW

Author of

*"Benefits Forgot," "Still Jim," "The Devonshers,"
"The Enchanted Canyon," etc.*



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PREFACE

Years ago, I read Miss Ida Tarbell's beautiful account of Lincoln's "Lost Speech" in her life of the Great Emancipator. The thought of that immense effort, with its still more immense results, haunted me. And I made up my mind that a very appealing piece of fiction could be based upon that episode in history. So, forthwith, I began to collect data in reference to the occasion which had brought forth that immortal and forgotten burst of oratory.

I did not limit my inquiries to books and reports. I found some of my most touching information in conversations with old people. My uncle, as an adolescent boy, heard that speech. He knew the girl, whom I call Rose Franklin, and whom I, later, knew as a handsome old lady. He knew

Lincoln, too. Another dear old friend knew the newspaper men I have mentioned in the story. And there are many other persons too numerous to mention here, who helped me find detail for the narrative. Little Bodie I knew for many years, until he died, at the age of seventy-four.

So, of those passionate human beings, already beginning to be obscured by the mists of time, I have set down the story, as simply and as sincerely as I might.

THE LOST SPEECH

VERY early on the morning of May 29, 1856, Rose Franklin walked up the chief thoroughfare of Bloomington, Illinois, with her small brother dragging on her hand. In her gray silk frock with its crinoline distended skirt, Rose was an imposing figure. She was so imposing, in fact, that even when the fragrant May wind had not wrapped him in the folds of his sister's billowing skirt, young Bodie was almost imperceptible to the naked eye. And young Bodie, at that, was not without his own splendors, for he wore a velvet suit and a stiff hat with long streamers and was eight years old and had a classic perfection of feature. He looked like his fair-haired mother, who had died at his birth.

Rose, however, looked like Ichabod Frank-

lin, the father of the two. And Ichabod had a dwarfing effect on nearly everyone but his daughter. She was twenty-eight, with her father's intelligent brown eyes and her father's intelligent forehead only partially concealed by the parted hair, waving on either side of it. She had, in lesser degree, her father's massive neck. The black curls, caught back loosely in a net, only served to accentuate its ivory strength. She carried her head a little forward, like Ichabod, and only recurrent dimples at the corners of her lips prevented her slender mouth from being too firm, like Ichabod's. Her shoulders were broad and straight, so broad that, contrasted with them and with the undulating crinoline, her waist was of astounding slimness.

She was, to quote her father, who was noted for a curious jealous devotion to her, "a splendid looking woman, though too large for most men's taste, thank heaven!" Not every man's taste, however. Among her

father's political friends and enemies there were half a dozen men who would have been passionately glad to marry Rose Franklin: Rose, splendid in mind as well as in body. She bore the impress of her pioneer mother who had been fearless and thoughtful, and who had taken on, with other women of her day, the responsibility not only of bearing children but of bearing commonwealths, as well.

She moved slowly along the street, looking about her with interest, until Bodie pulled impatiently at her hand. "Rose, I'm hungry. My stomach feels naked."

"Don't whine," said Rose. "You insisted on seeing the town before breakfast."

"But the town's awful long for such a little town and I thought it wouldn't take you so long to dress and——"

"Good heavens, Bodie! If it's as serious as all that, we'll go directly back to breakfast."

"There's father, now, on the hotel steps,"

said the boy. "Look, Rose! There's a man with him that's taller than he is. I thought father was the tallest man in the world."

"That's Mr. Lincoln. I'm glad he's come!" exclaimed Rose, quickening her pace. "I want to ask him something."

"Who's Mr. Lincoln?" whined Bodie. "I can't go so fast. It makes my stomach growl. I wish my legs were as long as yours."

"Mr. Lincoln's a friend of father's." Rose's voice was patient. "He's only a country lawyer but he's a very smart politician and you must be polite to him."

"I wish father was a politician instead of just an editor, then he'd have his picture in the paper like—" began Bodie.

But Rose was not heeding the child. She again quickened her pace, as her father turned into the hotel and Mr. Lincoln moved slowly down the steps.

"Mr. Lincoln!" she called.

The tall man paused and as Rose came up,

a little breathless, he removed his high hat and smiled.

"If the Illinois Central trains had your speed, Miss Rose, that Chicago special wouldn't be two hours late, this morning!"

The dimples flashed at the corners of Rose's mouth. "Poor Bodie finds my speed much less enjoyable than train speed!"

Mr. Lincoln looked down at the panting youngster. "So this is Ichabod's boy! Nice new suit you've got, son!"

"Velvet!" snarled Bodie, with the startling effect of an oath. "Wish I was dead!"

Lincoln chuckled, dug a copper from his pocket and handed it to Bodie. "Get yourself some hoarhound drops, son, and forget your clothes. That's my method."

Bodie took the copper and flew along the street to a grocery store whose proprietor was just opening his door for the day. Rose spoke in a low voice.

"Mr. Lincoln, has father said anything to

you of the trouble between him and Owen Bashford?"

The lawyer shook his head. "No! Of course, I know they're always fighting each other through their two papers."

"It's worse than that now!" exclaimed Rose. "It used to be only the usual enmity between Democrat and Whig. But you know Owen is a Stephen A. Douglas man. Day before yesterday, in Chicago, there was an indignation meeting of citizens over the attack in the Senate on Charles Sumner. . . . Surely, Mr. Lincoln, Congressman Brooks will be punished for that!"

Mr. Lincoln looked troubled. He shook his great head slowly. "It's hard to tell. Sumner himself will be the best judge of that, when he recovers from the beating, if he ever does. Adequate punishment of Brooks might set the whole South on fire."

"Let it!" exclaimed Rose, her dark eyes flashing. Then she returned to the object of

her interview. "That was a wild meeting, Mr. Lincoln. Father and Owen Bashford led opposing sides. Father was for forbidding any member of the Democratic party who did not declare himself against Brooks to come to this anti-Nebraskan convention. That made Owen furious and their arguing really broke up the meeting."

Mr. Lincoln looked troubled. "Your father has been talking to me of the same thing but he didn't speak of Owen with particularity, knowing, of course, how fond I am of the boy. I think I've beguiled your father from the thought of bringing up the Brooks attack at the convention to-day. This is a convention to unite all parties in a stand against slavery. The whole point of the gathering is to avoid party strife. I think your father sees that now." The lawyer looked at Rose keenly but with a little smile. "Does that remove your fears?"

"It—it at least makes me more hopeful,"

replied Rose. "I—I hesitate to say it, but you will understand, I'm sure. I can't help feeling that, almost unconsciously to himself, father's feeling against Owen's politics is made violent mostly because of the friendship between Owen and me. I don't think that even if Owen turned Whig, which he never will, father would soften toward him."

"We'll turn both Owen and your father into this new party, the Republican party. It's a good name."

"If we only could!" exclaimed Rose. "But so far their differences are irreconcilable."

"And a reconciliation would mean a great deal to you, Miss Rose?" asked Lincoln, gently.

Rose met his deep-set gaze squarely. "Yes, Mr. Lincoln." Then she added with a sudden, almost childish trembling of her delicate lips, "But I've almost given up hope!"

"Oh, don't say that!" cried Mr. Lincoln.

"You are too young to say that! Leave hopelessness to old fellows like me."

"You! Why, Mr. Lincoln, we all feel that you are just beginning your career. I'm expecting to address you as Senator Lincoln in the not distant future."

Lincoln shook his head slowly, but before he could speak, Bodie ran up, a long brown stick of candy protruding from his mouth. His nose had been bleeding.

"I had a fight with the grocer's boy," he explained, thickly. "He said these were girl's pants. After the fight, his father gave me three sticks of hoarhound for the penny."

Mr. Lincoln laughed delightedly. "And then what happened?"

"Oh, him and me are going fishing, if Rose will let me."

Rose smiled as she took a grimy little hand in hers. "Let's have breakfast first. Will you not share it with us, Mr. Lincoln?"

"Oh, I ate an hour ago!" replied the law-

yer. "I'll see you later." He swung into his long stride, down the street, and Rose led her little brother into the dining-room of the hotel.

Ichabod Franklin was sitting alone at a small table. He was writing on a reporter's pad and did not look up until Rose and Bodie had finished eating their cornmeal mush. Then he raised his head and gazed at Rose abstractedly. It was a heavily masculinized edition of his daughter's head, the black hair shot with gray, a deep line extending from the corner of either nostril to the corners of the mouth.

"Chicago train is late, I hear," he said. "I'm glad we came down last night."

Rose nodded. Bodie looked at his father without speaking. It was characteristic of the relations of the two that the little boy did not mention the fight that he had boasted of to his sister.

"Is Mr. Lincoln going to speak to-day?" asked Rose.

"No! He said there were so many other speakers he wouldn't be needed. I think he's wise. He's a good country lawyer but as a politician he lacks polish. He wouldn't get far with the sort of men who are coming to this convention."

Rose moved impatiently. "You underestimate Mr. Lincoln, father."

"Not at all. There's no man in Illinois I like more or have a higher opinion of in an advisory capacity. But he's been trying to get somewhere, politically, for a long time and he's never gotten anywhere. He's too easy going."

"Yet you take his political advice! Father, he has a great character!"

"Pshaw! More of your unaccountable hero worship," returned her father irritably.

"Bodie, leave the table, sir!"

Bodie, who had been concentrating quietly

on measuring the capacity of his mouth by ascertaining the amount of biscuit he could cram into it, jumped so hastily from his chair that he choked and deposited the mouthful of biscuits on his father's black broadcloth sleeve. Ichabod Franklin's wild temper flared. He sprang to his feet with an oath that paralyzed traffic in the dining-room, seized Bodie by the ear and led him from the room. Rose stared after them, scarlet faced, then with obvious effort went on with her coffee.

Ichabod returned shortly. "You spoil that brat, Rose," he snarled.

"He has no mother," replied Rose in a low voice. "He hasn't even the memory of her, as I have. She would have been gentle with him. The thing that I fear is that, looking so much like you, I may, as I grow older, develop, too, your irascible disposition. If that should happen, life would be a pretty unhappy affair for Bodie."

Ichabod stared at Rose, the great veins on his forehead swelling. "You are impertinent, Madam."

"No, father! Pardon me! I'm twenty-eight and merely losing the capacity for hero worship you accuse me of. You'll never have a more ardent admirer of yourself as a great newspaper editor than I am. But——"

"But what?" snapped Ichabod.

"But you are letting your irritability hamper your career. And you are making a little boy unhappy."

"Owen Bashford, on the other hand," growled Ichabod. "The blank—blank is a paragon of sweet temper."

"He's even tempered when he doesn't discuss politics with you," returned Rose. "What did you do with Bodie, father?"

"I sent him to his room. Don't go up there and coddle him. And for God's sake, take that velvet suit off him. He looks like a girl!"

The dimples appeared at the corners of Rose's mouth as she thought of Mr. Lincoln's genial disapprobation of Bodie's suit which, enhancing the boy's beauty as it did, she hadn't the slightest intention of discarding. But before she could reply to her father there was a commotion in the lobby and a group of frock-coated men filed into the dining-room. The Chicago train had arrived. Ichabod Franklin scanned the entering faces eagerly.

"They're all here, by Jove! This is throwing down the gauntlet to Douglas with a vengeance! And there's some of the state crowd: Selby and Davis and Buck and Ex-Governor Reeder!"

The editor rose, with a fine smile illuminating his brown eyes and the entering delegates surged toward him. Ichabod was the rallying point for the Illinois Whigs and men gladly recognized this while shrugging

their shoulders at his distempers. In a moment, tables had been shoved up to lengthen the Franklin table and ten or twelve men were calling for breakfast, while they answered Ichabod's staccato fusillade of questions.

"Where is Owen Bashford?" asked Rose. "Oh, there he is!" answering her own question as a tall, slender man of perhaps thirty-five appeared in the door. Impulsively, Rose beckoned to him. Owen advanced, smiling. He was as fair as Bodie, but with a hawk-like aquilinity of feature the little boy never would have. His eyes, very blue and very intelligent, were fastened on Rose.

"How are you, Rose?" he asked, shaking hands.

"Sit down, Bashford!" cried the delegate from Jacksonville. "Room for one more!"

"One moment, please," exclaimed Ichabod. "Bashford, have you decided to re-

pudiate Brooks and declare that the attack was inexcusable?"

"Franklin!" exclaimed a man, with a white beard, "I beg of you, let that matter drop! You are jeopardizing a very great affair by your attitude. We all know Bashford's stand against slavery and we all recognize the enormous influence of his newspaper. We need him at this convention."

Rose, with a little nod of approval, turned to Owen Bashford, with a deep, tender look. Ichabod saw that look and brought his fist down on the table.

"Gentlemen, I await the courtesy of a reply from Mr. Bashford."

Owen lifted his chin a little. He spoke with a slight drawl for which his Virginia mother may have been responsible.

"Charles Sumner practically called Brooks' uncle a skunk in a speech that was filled with studied insult for all the Southern

congressmen. It was a speech containing more exquisite indelicacies than any that Sumner, with all his proficiency in that line, ever has attempted before. The very men who scorn what they call Abe Lincoln's coarseness, hold Sumner's refined insolence up to praise. For myself, I prefer Lincoln's method. Sumner deserved punishment, but Brooks' methods were unfair and too rough. Both men should apologize, Brooks for the brutality of his arm and Sumner for the brutality of his tongue."

Again Rose nodded and as again Ichabod saw the approbation in his daughter's face, he rose, leaned across the little table that separated him from Owen and struck him on the chin. It was a heavy blow. For a moment there was utter silence in the dining-room. Even the waitresses, with their noisy movements of raw country girls, were still.

It was Owen Bashford who broke the silence. "But, Mr. Franklin," he drawled,

"this puts you in the class with Brooks, does it not?"

"Come out and fight, you hybrid Democrat, you!" shouted Ichabod.

Half a dozen hands seized him, as he again lunged at the motionless Owen. Rose, now on her feet, looked wildly from her father's face to Owen's. She knew that it was her presence beside the younger editor which was driving her father to this unprecedented excess, but she hesitated to seem to run away. It was Bodie who offered her a solution. A chambermaid, who had not witnessed the episode, hurried up to Rose.

"Your little brother's yelling bloody murder for you," she said in a whisper that carried across the dining-room. "He's disturbing all the folks that ain't out of bed yet."

Rose turned quickly from the embattled breakfast table and made her way up to Bodie's room. The little boy was sitting on the edge of his bed, howling with all the

abandon of a disconsolate puppy. Rose closed the door after her and taking Bodie's hand, she led him to a rocking chair beside the window. She caught a towel from the washstand as she passed. Bodie, big boy as he was, snuggled gratefully on her lap when she had seated herself and gently began to wipe his face. She did not speak, until his wild weeping had given way to an occasional sob.

"There, dear! Feel better?" she asked.

"How would you feel if your ear had been pulled out by the roots?" demanded Bodie. "I hate him, the old black pirate!"

"No! No! No! Bodie, you must not speak so of him. He's your father."

The child's chin quivered. "Well, he never pulled your ear. You said mother wouldn't let him. The great, big, old bully, picking on a little boy! How did I know the old biscuits would fly that way? I had a right to see how much I could chew at once,

didn't I? Or aren't my teeth mine, either?"

Rose gathered the boy to her shoulder, rested her cheek against his hair and began to rock.

"Mother loved him, Bodie, oh, so much! She looked on his temper as his affliction, like heart disease would be or consumption. You look very like her. I suppose every time he sees you, he's reminded over again of his terrible loss. For he'll never get over missing her. Just think! He's the greatest editor west of the Alleghanies and she will never, never know it. Poor father!"

Bodie was tall and precocious for eight, yet he snuffled like a very little boy and buried his cheek deeper on his sister's shoulder. "Tell me some more," he said huskily. "It makes my throat stop aching."

"When I was little like you," Rose went on, "father lost his temper with me and mother came into the room just as he was going to whip me. And Mother just put her

hand on his arm and said, 'Ichabod, you are ill again!' And father dropped his cane and stared at her and finally he said, 'Yes, Isabel, God forgive me, I'm ill again!' . . . You see, Bodie, when God took her away He took from father his very mainstay."

The child did not speak for a moment, then he asked, "Why did God take her away?"

"I don't know, unless He thought life was too hard for her. She was not strong. I think, even though she loved father so deeply, she was glad to go where there was perfect peace."

"You're like mother, Rose, aren't you?"

"No, I'm like father, only so far I've had enough of mother's strength to make me able to fight down my temper. You are like mother. You see, Bodie, father has tremendous cares on his shoulders. America is in trouble."

The boy sat erect. "America's in trouble? What do you mean, Rose?"

Rose looked at her small brother thoughtfully. "I don't think I can make you understand it all, Bodie. But men like father and Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Bashford are afraid that the North and the South will quarrel so over slavery that America will be hurt, terribly hurt. Perhaps, fall apart like a house shaken by an earthquake. Father, your own father, Bodie, got the idea of calling together several hundred men in Illinois who love America as he does and who don't want slavery and who can make their neighbors think as they do. He wants them to form a huge party to fight against slavery and to keep America from falling apart. And that's why we have come down from Chicago and why all those splendid men have come to Bloomington, to carry out father's idea. His idea might save the nation if enough states took it up. Think of that, Bodie! Poor, crazy-tempered father!"

Bodie stared out of the open window. It

was prairie spring without. The street on which the hotel was set ended in endless prairie green—green and still more green. The heavenly scent of it poured in through the window.

“That’s America out there, isn’t it, Rose?” asked Bodie.

“Yes, hundreds of thousands of miles of it. And father carries on his shoulders the weight of feeling that he must save it. That’s rather wonderful, isn’t it, little Bodie?”

As the child nodded silently, there came a rap on the door. “Come in!” called Rose. The door swung open, disclosing Mr. Lincoln and Ichabod Franklin on the threshold. Ichabod stared at the two, in the rocking chair, but before his elders could speak, the little boy slid from his sister’s knee and went quickly up to his father, holding out his hand.

“You see, father,” he said clearly, “I didn’t understand until Rose explained. You

can twist my ear all you want to if it will help you to bear America's troubles."

Ichabod looked at Rose in utter bewilderment. She spoke quickly. "You've forgotten that you punished him, father, for coughing all over your coat."

"Oh! I remember clearly enough now. Don't let it happen again, sir!"

Rose thrust Bodie toward the door. "You can go over and play with the grocer's boy until I call for you, Bodie."

Mr. Lincoln spoke for the first time. "In the handsome velvet suit?"

"I'm not going to take it off for him!" replied Bodie. "I've got him licked." He bolted from the room.

"Mr. Lincoln wants to talk to you, Rose," said Ichabod, abruptly. "I've told them to keep the little parlor at the end of the hall clear for you."

Rose moved toward the door. "You are coming with us, father?"

"No, I have other matters—in my room."

Rose led the way to the parlor, her face filled with anxiety. Mr. Lincoln seated her, then walked slowly up and down the room. "Miss Rose, how did you beguile the little boy into an apology?"

"I didn't want him to apologize, Mr. Lincoln, I wanted him to forgive. I want Bodie not to have an unhappy childhood and—and—he's growing to hate father. So I explained to him the very big things father is doing."

The lawyer nodded. "You did a good job. I remember your mother. She had that same power. Miss Rose, you'll have to use it again, I think. Your father, by his action to Bashford just now, has roused all the partisan bitterness that we'd hoped to dissolve, by this convention. He's hurt his leadership so that some of the best men say they won't stay to be led by a man who could say and do what he did to Owen Bashford. It's very

bad! . . . Miss Rose, this convention must not fail."

"What can I do?" asked Rose.

"I hesitate to ask you. But from what you told me yourself and from what your father's friends and yours tell me, I must believe that much of Ichabod's enmity toward Owen is based on his jealousy of your friendship for Owen. If your father could receive a promise from you that you would give up Owen——"

Mr. Lincoln paused. Rose whitened. "You are asking me to make father a promise that— Mr. Lincoln, does Owen know of this?"

"No," said the lawyer. "Neither your father nor Owen know, but if you make that promise I shall ask them to abide by it."

Rose drew herself slowly from her chair and stood facing Mr. Lincoln. The lawyer, preoccupied as he was, gave her a glance of appreciation. She was, indeed, a splendid

looking woman: her massive head, her broad shoulders, her slender waist, her sweeping skirts. Here was a presence, he thought, that royalty might envy. She twisted her hands together until the knuckles cracked.

"It's too much," she said brokenly. "That I cannot do."

"You are very sure, Miss Rose? Take time. It is a momentous decision. The fate of the nation may hinge on this convention."

"It's too much," repeated Rose. "I haven't Bodie's forgiving disposition. Friendship after friendship, his temper or his jealousy has broken. But they were only friendships. This—this feeling between Owen and me—Mr. Lincoln, did you—no, you never could have felt to any woman as I do to Owen or you would not ask me to destroy that feeling."

Mr. Lincoln's sallow face suddenly became livid. "You can say that? Although it was common talk that I almost lost my mind when

Ann Rutledge was laid in her grave! . . .
Do I not know?"

"And would you have given her up for such a reason?" cried Rose.

Lincoln turned his gaunt face toward the window and again Rose followed another's gaze out to the green of the prairies that pressed upon the little town. Again she was conscious of the May wind drenched with the nameless sweetness of the plains.

"I don't know," replied the lawyer, slowly. "I pray God that I could have, had the need arisen. And equally I thank Him that the choice was not forced upon me. And yet, I'm counting on your strength, Miss Rose. And on your knowledge. No man in Illinois knows better than you the awful need of the hour."

"It's not fair! It's not right!" Rose's voice was as low as Mr. Lincoln's, but where his was sad, hers was vehement. "Natures like my father's—that give to the world while

they draw from the family like—like leeches! Must one give one's last drop of blood to them?"

"I think so," replied Mr. Lincoln, carefully. "I have found it to be so."

"I cannot do it!" panted Rose, never raising her voice and never ceasing to twist her long, fine hands together.

"By sheer force of intellect," the quiet man went on, "your father has made himself the leader of the best minds in the West. Miss Rose, I am full of uneasy foreboding. Unless the men, who are against slavery, cease quarreling among themselves, we face national disaster. Your father must change his stand on Owen Bashford or he loses his leadership of this convention, and I know of no man to take his place."

"You could take it, Mr. Lincoln!" exclaimed Rose.

"No! I haven't your father's education.

And this is a convocation of the kind of men who are moved by the educated intellect."

Rose stared at the man, moved as she always was by his gentle persistence.

"But, Mr. Lincoln! To give up Owen! What of him, with his splendid brain and great promise of future leadership? Don't you know that what you are asking me to do will blast his life for years to come?"

"If his private griefs impair his sense of public duty, then he's——"

Rose interrupted. "Then he's no better than my father, you would say! And I—I, too, am of the same kind!"

"Tarred with the same stick!" Mr. Lincoln smiled a little, but his searching gaze did not lift from Rose's face.

"But life must not do this to me!" breathlessly. "I am twenty-eight. I shall not love again. And as far as I know, I have but the one life to live. Living with father, without

my mother, has been one long punishment. I wanted Owen. Oh, I wanted him!"

The lawyer turned from his deep contemplation of the tragic face before him to gaze again upon the prairies. His own lips were quivering but he did not speak.

"And Owen, himself!" panted Rose. "The kind of man who would love me cannot do so lightly. And I am to crucify him then——?"

Mr. Lincoln cleared his throat. "Do you know of any other appeal that would move Ichabod?"

Rose stood, in silence, looking back through the years, facing once and for all what she had learned about bad temper in human beings. And she realized that no appeal to her father regarding his temper would move him. To Ichabod, his loss of self-control was always righteous indignation. She stood silent so long that Mr. Lincoln began to pace the floor again. Rose

spoke in a startled voice, as if she could not believe her own conclusion.

"I'll see what I can do with father."

Mr. Lincoln came slowly toward her, his face flushed in sympathy with her pallor. "And having reached so great a decision, I know that you will carry it out with as much adroitness as you showed in handling Bodie. . . . It's not for me to thank you, Miss Rose, that's in the hands of the God of Nations. Only," he placed a great hand on either of Rose's fine shoulders, "will you not let me say that I have found that the only real satisfaction in one's life comes not from personal joys, but from— Ah, Miss Rose! Miss Rose! I know all that you are suffering! All!"

He turned hastily away, picked up his high hat and left the room.

Rose looked out at the prairie. "God, You help me," she whispered. Then, after a moment's deep breathing of the fragrant May

wind, she went down the hall to her father's room.

He was seated at the table, dictating to his secretary. Rose crossed the room swiftly. She felt as if she had been running a long race. "Father, will you ask Arthur to leave us alone for a little while?"

Ichabod looked up, impatiently. "This is important, Rose."

"But this is more important. Don't defer hearing what I have to say, father, please."

Ichabod, with a little scowl, nodded at his secretary, who left the room hastily. Rose sat down in his place opposite her father.

"Mr. Lincoln," she said, "has been talking to me about your position as leader of this convention, father. He feels that you are the only man fitted to weld together the various factions. Of course, many of us have known that, for a long time, but it is a notable thing to have a man like Mr. Lincoln volunteer such a comment."

Ichabod stared at his daughter. "Is that what he was so insistent on seeing you about? He's an adroit politician. I wonder if Mark Antony is growing ambitious and by some method of indirection——"

"No! No! You misjudge him, indeed, father! I asked him point blank if he could pull the convention together. He seemed so worried about it. But he said no, that he lacked the educational qualifications you possess."

"Did he, indeed?" Ichabod looked thoughtful. "Well, he's right. I'm glad he recognizes his own limitations. Lincoln is first rate on the Sangamon and an extremely keen politician. But he's too coarse fibered for large uses. What did he want of you, daughter?"

"Before I answer that, father, let me ask you a question. Are you still worried lest internal quarrels break up the convention?"

"Still worried? Why Rose, where's your

usual acumen? I am distracted with fear lest the new party be still-born. Didn't you understand, this morning, how they are going to use that cursed Sumner-Brooks episode?"

Rose bit her lips, then sat slowly erect. "I've been thinking, father, that with so much at stake, I shall withdraw my friendship for Owen Bashford. I do not know that it will force Owen to change his attitude, but at least it may make you feel—" She paused, astounded by the vivid light that leaped to her father's eyes.

Ichabod leaned across the table. "You will do that? You have that faith in the righteousness of my position?"

Rose nodded.

Her father sprang to his feet. "Rose! Rose! I feel as I've not felt since your mother was with me—that I have the vital backing of my own! Pshaw! I care little now whether Owen retracts his statements or

not. With this knowledge of you behind me, I can move mountains. Ah, Rose! Blood is thicker than water."

Rose was very pale and she did not move until she lifted her head to say, "But, father, Owen has many backers. How will you satisfy them?"

"Oh, I shall withdraw my exactions. I shall be magnanimous."

Rose nodded. "The blow at the breakfast table—did Owen return that after I left?"

"No!" Ichabod's face darkened.

"I think perhaps your magnanimity must extend to an apology for that, father. It would be an example to Brooks and his kind. You see," as Ichabod threw back his head with a jerk, "I look on this as one of the greatest works of your life. As Mr. Lincoln says, it may mean the saving of the nation. The credit will always belong to you and I want history to record against you nothing that can be misinterpreted, to mar your record."

Ichabod's expression gradually lightened. He interrupted Rose to say, "Our private prejudices must give way. Owen Bashford's faction is needed. I shall send him a letter of apology. And, Rose," as she got slowly to her feet, "Rose, my daughter, I have not been altogether blind to your feeling for Owen. I shall make it my duty to make you feel that there has been no real sacrifice."

"Thank you, father," said Rose, dully. "I must go for Bodie." And she left the room on leaden feet.

But she was not to reach her small brother at once, for Owen stood at the door of the little upstairs parlor. He held the door open for her and closed it behind her. His nostrils were pinched, his eyes full of pain.

"Rose! Mr. Lincoln told me! Have you been to your father?"

"Yes!"

"Without first seeing me? Was that fair?"

Had I not the right to question my own death warrant?"

"We think so much alike," replied Rose, slowly, "that I felt you'd understand and submit to the decision."

"You thought that any new party in the world would be worth the sacrifice of you?" Owen moved toward Rose. He was taller than she, a virile, upstanding man, with a fine mouth. There was heartbreak in his voice as he said, "For it is my death warrant!" He put his arms around Rose. She buried her face against his cheek but he turned her lips to his and kissed her. "There! There is my soul, laid on your lips, Rose. It never can return to me. Now, can you give me up?"

Rose did not reply for a moment while she gathered together every force within her. Then she said, "A little while ago, in this room, Mr. Lincoln and I buried Rose Franklin, the person. There's left only Rose

Franklin, the abolitionist. . . . Owen, don't you understand why I did it?"

"Yes, Rose, I understand." The man touched her tortured face with his trembling fingers. "Look at me, Rose! I want to see if the decision is irrevocable."

His eyes grew more haggard as he gazed. "And do you think that I shall tamely submit to this sort of thing from your father?"

"I've given him my word and he's writing you an apology. Owen, if you do not accept that apology, the wrecking of the new party will be on your head."

"In other words," exclaimed Owen, with sudden bitterness, "if I submit, I lose you. If I do not submit, I wreck the convention, become an object of contempt to you and lose you, anyhow! Rose, this is not justice. It is not——"

He turned from her as the door flung open and Bodie entered dangling a fish of about

three inches in length on the end of a string. He was dripping wet and muddy.

"The first one I ever caught, Rose! I brought it to you!"

Before Rose could speak, her father's secretary appeared in the door. "I have a message for you, sir, from Mr. Lincoln. Could you step this way? He is in Mr. Franklin's room with Messrs. Lovejoy and Davis."

Owen drew a long breath. "I'll see you, shortly, Rose, and finish this," he said, and followed Arthur down the hall.

Rose led the excited Bodie to his room, murmuring enthusiastic but mechanical admiration of the fish. She helped him to change from the dripping velvets.

"You come fishing with me, Rose!" he cried. "It beats any old convention!"

"I wish I could, Bodie dear, but I must spend the rest of the day at the hall."

"Well, but Rose," Bodie spoke anxiously,

"I can eat dinner with you, can't I, and supper?"

"Yes, and if you want me, you may come to Major's Hall down the street and someone will find me for you."

Bodie, in a clean linen suit, eyed his sister suspiciously. "Have you been crying, Rose?"

"No, dear!"

"Because if father ever makes you cry, I'm going to do to him what I did to the grocer's boy. Just because I wear velvet pants ain't saying I can't fight or catch fish!" His ferocity of manner combined with his almost girlish beauty amused and charmed Rose, heartsore as she was. She kissed the little boy gratefully. He went on with great vehemence. "And I met Mr. Lincoln outside and he said he felt just like me when he caught his first fish, but that he didn't have on velvet pants. And I told him if he talked about them any more, I'd fight him. And he

said he'd never blame me. He's a nice man. Lots nicer than father, even if father is smarter. I'm going to catch him a fish."

Rose put on her "shepherdess" hat and held out her hand to Bodie. "You can walk with me as far as Major's Hall, then you'll know the way," she said.

All that day, Rose sat in the hall, watching the birth pangs by which a great political party was making its advent into Illinois. What Mr. Lincoln or her father may have said to Owen she did not know, for all that day he did not come near her. And after the first few hours, Rose succeeded in concentrating her mind to some degree on the events in the hall.

As the day wore on, she found something more than personal excitement enthralling her. Ichabod had convinced Rose, months before, as he had convinced the five or six hundred delegates to the convention, that the abolition movement was not mere party cant

but a deep-seated issue involving the very fate of the nation. Rose watched with breathless eagerness for signs of the partisan hostility which had flared so menacingly in the early morning. What means her father used, she did not know, but soothed and secured from jealousy by her promise, he was able to bring remarkable outward harmony into the session of political enemies. There could be no doubt of the earnestness and high purpose of the gathering, now that, moved by the national emergency, Whig and Democrat, Free Soiler, Know-nothing and Abolitionists—the lions and the lambs lay together in apparent amity.

There were many good speeches made: the finest of all, undoubtedly, by Ichabod Franklin, who in asking that the new party be known as the Republican, gave a history of the anti-slavery movement in America that the brilliant Charles Sumner could not have bettered.

And yet——!

And yet, Rose knew, as did her father and every man and woman in Major's Hall, that night, that when the Republican party of Illinois had been born, it had been born dead!

Ichabod had been able to make men see with their minds what to do. He had not been able to make them feel it with their hearts. It was a party without vital impulse, without cohesion, without driving force. As the evening wore on, a curious uncertainty and apprehensiveness settled on the great gathering. This creature, born of the day's travail, never would live to fight the passionate South, and her sacrifice was to prove vain. After all, her father had not been the man to birth this thing. Rose realized this toward the end of the evening, with a sense of impending disaster that was epic in its proportions. But, she whispered to herself, the convention must not fail! It must not!

A delegate from one of the border counties

was telling of the sacking of Lawrence, Kansas, by guerrilla posses. Rose turned impatiently from his spread-eagle eloquence and stooped over Bodie, who lay asleep with his golden head in her lap.

"Bodie," she whispered, "Mr. Lincoln is in the back of the hall by the door. Will you ask him to come here to me?"

Bodie rubbed his sleepy eyes with a clenched fist from which protruded a fish's silvery tail. "I'll give him the minnie I caught for him," he murmured.

In an astonishingly short time he was back, clinging to Mr. Lincoln's great hand. The lawyer dropped into Bodie's seat and held the child between his knees. The fish lay in one huge outspread palm.

"Mr. Lincoln," said Rose, softly, "if they call you, speak!"

"Nothing can rouse this corpse," returned Mr. Lincoln. "It's as dead as this little fish."

"You can rouse it. If the people call you,

reply to them! Won't you? Have you, by any chance, outlined something?"

Lincoln nodded. "I've thought for weeks of what ought to be said. I've nothing written, though."

"If they call for you, will you speak?" insisted Rose.

"Only if the call is general. Don't you see that otherwise it would be wasted effort?"

"Yes, I do," agreed Rose. "Will you return to the back of the hall now, Mr. Lincoln?" She put her hand on his arm in apology for the request.

Mr. Lincoln nodded as simply as did Bodie at his sister's requests. He looked down at the very defunct fish in his palm, then at Bodie, leaning against his great knee.

"Isn't it a Jim Dandy?" whispered the little boy, slipping an arm around the lawyer's neck.

"It's more than that," replied Mr. Lincoln, soberly. He shook his head over the fish,

then solemnly slipped it into his pocket. Bodie gave a wriggle of satisfaction and Mr. Lincoln kissed the child's round cheek, and with a nod to Rose, returned to the back of the hall.

A moment later, the delegate from the border county finished his speech, and in the burst of applause that followed, Rose stood erect. Her commanding presence, her splendid look received instant attention. She raised her hand.

"I want to hear Abraham Lincoln speak!" she cried.

There was a moment's silence, while the delegates swung to her suggestion, then a man shouted, "Lincoln! Abe Lincoln!"

A hundred voices took up the cry. Five hundred voices joined in. Rose sank into her place, with a sigh, as the tall figure strode down the aisle.

He paused as if to speak from the floor.

"Get up on the platform, Lincoln," roared someone, "and tell us——"

A still greater voice drowned the other. "Speak to us. Tell us, Watchman, what of the night!"

"Watchman, what of the night?"

The phrase caught the imagination of the crowd and it was repeated in breathless anxiety as Lincoln mounted the platform and stood for a moment waiting for silence. . . .

Ah, well! How shall one describe what Lincoln said? It was sixty-seven years ago that he made this, the greatest speech of his life. Men still live who, as adolescent boys, heard him that May evening in Bloomington. They say that, that night, standing on that platform, the beauty of his utterances was only equaled by the inspired beauty of his face! That he spoke like a god, moved by the supernatural.

His face was pale. His great eyes burned black fire. His voice, which sometimes had

been called too harsh, deepened and enveloped the great room in thundering organ notes. His audience, always glad to be amused and touched by one of Honest Abe's homely speeches, sat for the first few moments stunned by the transfiguration of the plain country lawyer into something greater than they readily could conceive.

He moved toward the front of the platform, his hands on his hips, and there was not a man who saw him who did not realize that here was a human being actuated by an overwhelming responsibility to the nation. He spoke for an hour and a half. At the end of the first five minutes, reporters dropped their pencils, absorbed by the passion of the orator. At the end of the first three-quarters of an hour, the reporters, with the rest of the audience, had risen from their seats and when Lincoln, his great arms lifted above his head, made a last appeal to the greatness of men's souls to stand against the

break-up of the nation, his audience, pale of face, with tear-drenched eyes, had pressed forward from their places so that they made a solid human mass about the platform. And, as he ceased to speak, they burst forth in applause that was half worship, seized upon him and carried him to their hearts.

The new party had been born anew, its factions welded by tears.

Rose, clasping her little brother with one arm, pressed forward with the rest, her very soul lifted from her body. As Lincoln finished his peroration, she found her father beside her, his face drawn, tears streaming unchecked from his dark eyes.

‘Yes! Yes!’ she heard him sob. ‘Yes! Yes! This speech will stay the hand of civil war.’

Rose slipped her hand through her father’s. “I must thank him,” muttered Ichabod. “He has done the impossible.

The Republican party lives and breathes and——”

“Let’s go back to the hotel,” said Rose, “and talk to him there. It will be impossible to get near him here for a long time.”

Ichabod was too profoundly moved to come back to normal at once. He stood running his hands through his hair and repeating phrases from Lincoln’s speech. Rose had not seen him so moved since the night her mother died. Suddenly he turned to her.

“I misjudged him!” he exclaimed. “Lincoln is a great man. He can do anything. I shall do for him whatever he asks. A man who can speak like that! By the eternal fathers, he has kindled a torch to-night that shall flare higher and higher, till it lights the world.”

Men who could not reach Mr. Lincoln began to come up to congratulate Ichabod. He was strangely humble and told one after another that it had not been at his suggestion

that Rose had called for Lincoln. The credit was hers.

"Then your daughter has put the country very deeply in her debt," said one man. "This party owes to her an inspiration that should carry it through a century of politics. I was glad to see Owen Bashford subdued and in line to-day."

Ichabod, still in the exalted mood begot by the speech, turned to Rose. "That, too, was my daughter's work!" Rose gave her father a strange look. In spite of the feeling roused in her by Mr. Lincoln's oratory, she was acutely conscious of the death-like pain in her heart. Ichabod caught the look. "You are glad now of the sacrifice, are you not, Rose?"

Rose, the weary Bodie leaning heavily against her, replied brokenly, "Was it a necessary sacrifice, father? Now, still with the sound of Mr. Lincoln's great plea in your

ears for devotion to human happiness—was it a necessary sacrifice?”

Ichabod stood staring at his daughter from the fine heights to which Lincoln had lifted him. Rose, for once, saw him as she thought her mother must once have idealized him, with a nobility of soul equal to the brilliancy of his mind.

“Do you think that it was not necessary, Rose?”

“I know it was not,” she replied brokenly.

“And do you think,” cried Ichabod, “that I can do less for the party than you, or—or—or my deadliest rival?”

He whirled suddenly and crossed the side to where Owen Bashford stood with a group of friends. Ichabod held out his hand to the younger editor. “Sir,” he said, “do you realize that it was my daughter who put Mr. Lincoln on that platform this evening?”

Very reluctantly Owen took the proffered hand. “We all realize that, sir!”

"Then we owe to her," continued Ichabod, "the fact that we've seen the first great blow struck at slavery. That speech, Mr. Bashford, has made me feel very small, very petty. I wish to bury all my private strifes. Will you accept my friendship, sir, public and private?"

Owen's group gasped. Nothing could have so assured them of the quality of Mr. Lincoln's speech as the effect it was showing on the bitter and brilliant Ichabod Franklin. Owen, whose tear-stained cheeks did not detract from his dignity, bowed over the hand which still clung to his. Ichabod, with heaven knows what sudden cognizance of the grief his selfishness had caused, cleared his throat.

"Come, Owen," he said, huskily, "come over to Rose."

And Rose, watching the conversation she could not hear, clung trembling to Bodie as

she saw the two approach her. Her father was smiling.

"Rose, here's our friend Owen. I'm asking him to take you and Bodie back to the hotel."

Bodie showed sudden interest in life. "Say, he made that speech with the fish I gave him in his pocket. I'll get you one to-morrow, father."

"If it will do for me—" Ichabod suddenly interrupted himself to catch at the sleeve of one of his own reporters. "Cooper! Are your notes complete? We must print that speech without a single omission."

Cooper blinked at his chief with bloodshot eyes. "But—but Mr. Franklin, I couldn't take notes listening to that!"

"What do you mean, sir?" roared Ichabod.

"What I say," replied Cooper with a gulp. "There isn't a reporter here who took down that speech!"

"Where's Hartopp, my correspondent?" exclaimed Owen.

"Over yonder," said Cooper.

"Get all the newspaper men together at the hotel at once," snapped Ichabod. "Rose, your memory is excellent. Come along."

He dashed out into the night. Rose and Owen followed, leading the comatose Bodie between them. They had not exchanged a word. It was not necessary. The very prairie stars above them sang the ecstasy in their hearts.

When they reached the hotel, the effort to recapture the speech began. But it was a vain hunt. Mr. Lincoln could not recall what he had said. Entirely exhausted, he took a solitary walk under the stars and went to his bed. No one in the audience had set down the speech. It was lost to the world forever.

It had reconciled the irreconcilable. It had in very truth, as history has proved, lighted the torch that was to flare round the

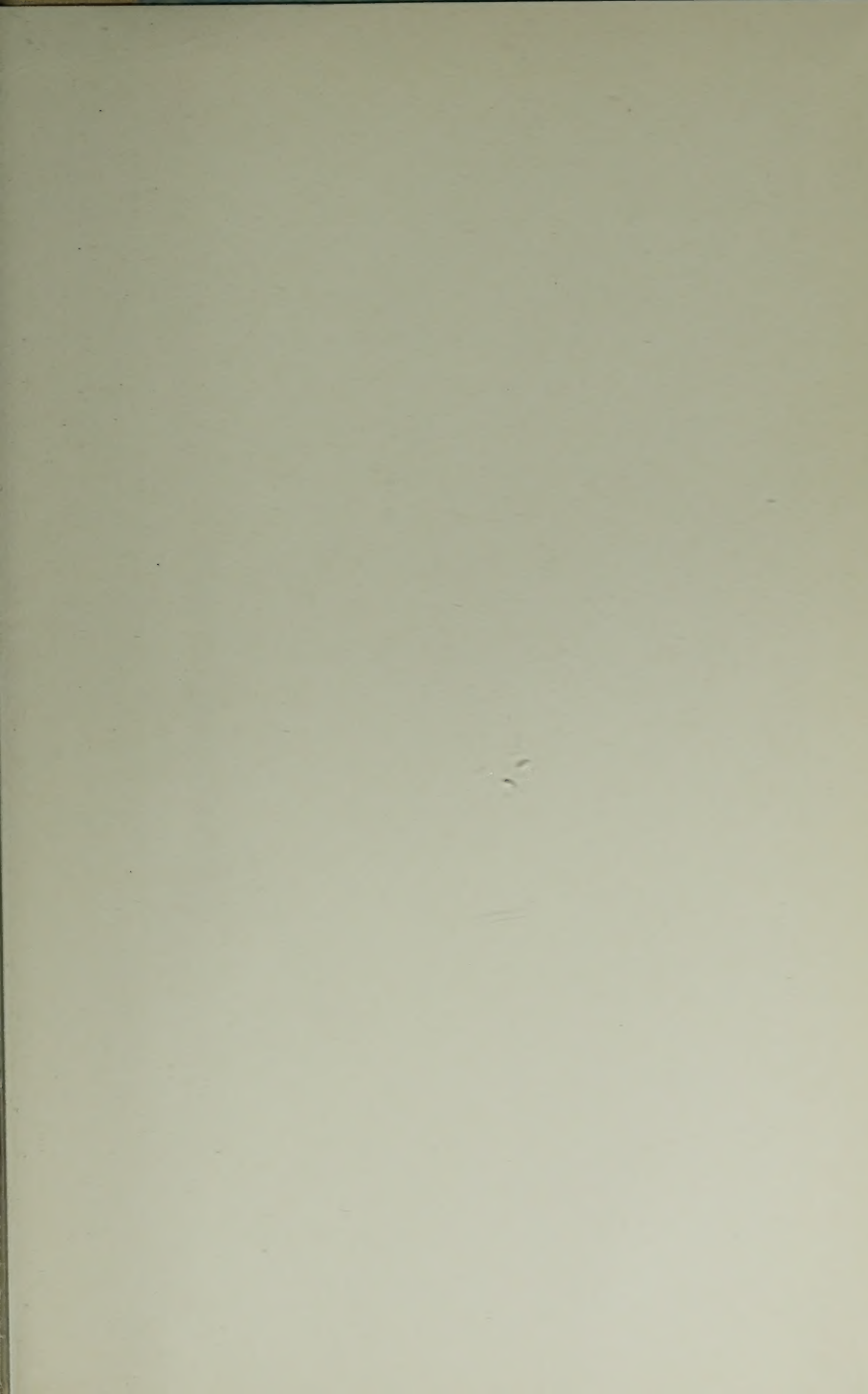
world. Its passion, its tragic beauty, its noble inspirations had breathed life into the dead souls of men. Then it had disseminated itself into the common air and men were to hand it on to posterity only in a phrase, the Lost Speech.

In despair, Ichabod and Owen finally sent their reporters away to set down such phrases as they could recall or rescue from other minds. Ichabod began to transcribe his own recollections and Owen departed to do likewise. He followed Rose down the hall and drew her for a moment into the little parlor.

Dawn was lifting across the eastern plains. The two stood for a long moment, arms entwined, eyes on the unspeakable beauty of the prairie distances. Then, without a word, Owen drew Rose into his arms and kissed her with passionate devotion. And then, still without a word, they parted for what remained of the night.

THE END





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